

To understand the development of WVCC you need to know something of the history of the Village of Wilden, particularly two men from opposite ends of the social spectrum without either nothing would have happened.



Alfred Baldwin and Thomas Jones



Alfred Baldwin, above left, believed he had a duty of responsibility towards his workforce, his idea was to create a community catering for all their needs, work, religion, social and recreational.

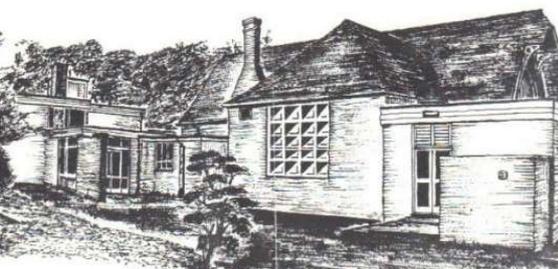


Wilden Works circa 1854 and

All Saints' Church circa 1880



He took over the Wilden Works in 1870 quickly making it financially viable, building the church 1880 and the school 1882 and creating a recreational field. Thomas Jones, above right, offer the mysterious magical ingredient which proved to be the catalyst



All Saints School circa 1882

Old recreation Field circa





The Baldwin Recreation Field was very much a social centre as well as an area of sporting excellence offering tennis, bowls, cricket and football as well the village green as shown in the two photographs below. The houses in Bigbury Lane just visible.

The old Recreational Field was a social centre

The facilities reached such a high standard that a County Cricket match between Worcestershire and Essex was staged at this venue. Images of the original pavilion can be seen below right with the two county teams.

With the closure of the works 1958, this facility soon fell into decay, with nature taking its course.



Worcestershire v Essex, the County Match played on the old Recreational Field





Thomas worked here

Thomas lived here



At this point we should introduce Thomas Jones 1820 – 1899, a farm labourer, who worked as a cowman on a farm near Chaddesley Corbett earning 12 shillings and

sixpence per week. Thomas owned at least one field in the Wilden area which he rented to Mr. Felton, the Wilden Works Manager 1866 - 1899, collecting the rent each quarter day. In his will Thomas bequeath some money to the Wilden School adding a condition that the children placed flowers and sang over his grave on the anniversary of his birthday, St. Swithin’s Day, a tradition that continues today.

With little documentation the facts surrounding it, this bequest became distorted where upon local legend had it that Thomas had **“left the field for all time for the children of Wilden for their recreational needs”**. The facts were that the land had been sold and it was the residue of the cash that had been given to the school and that there was no land.

However, this provided the motivation to discover the true facts when two local councillors with connections to the school began to investigate. Once the truth was discovered a piece of land was developed for the school children under the guardian ship of the Head Teacher at a peppercorn rent. The land owners, the West Family, under the guidance of Edith, former Postmistress, Councillor, PCC treasurer and School Governor, together with the Head Teacher recognised the need for a recreational facility for the school which would indeed benefit the entire community.

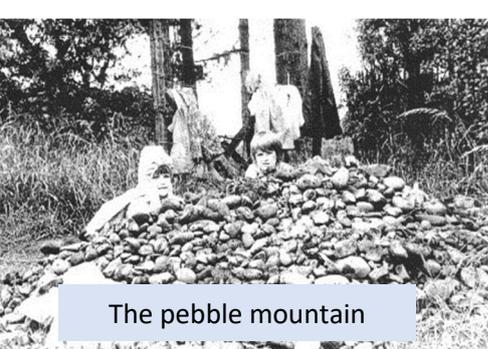


The field in question, A, part of the ancient

Hartlebury Common, was prepared under an agreement with the charitable arm of Quayle Carpets who were gifted the remaining land between the nominated field and Wilden Top Road.



The old Recreational Field **E**, WVCC **A**



The pebble mountain

In return Quayle's funded the fencing and ground work. Sadly, the firm shortly after completion went into liquidation with their land being sold to a private purchaser.

The multitude of pebbles associated with this sandstone outcrop created their own problem, which was resolved to a greater extent through the hard work of the school who organised a sponsored pebble pick removing their own weight in pebbles from the site. Their haul was deposited at the entrance to the path leading to the Village Hall. Miraculously the whole pile, some several tons, disappeared over night!



The pebble pickers

The grass flourished allowing the school to hold their sports day on the field in June of 1978. Such a facility was a blessing for the school, avoiding trekking miles over busy roads to other borrowed sites. A small shed was created from timber offcuts supplied free by a local timber outlet to facilitate minor emergencies.



First sports day 1978

Once the school adjourned for the summer holidays soil acquired from the Sugar Beet site was collected, free of charge, to begin the basis of a cricket square.



The winter period was one of planning and fund raising with ideas aplenty!

Progress was supported by local businesses proving equipment free of charge and the wicket was a success allowing the "Wilden Cricket Team" whose home matches were played some 30 miles away near Walsall, to relocate in the Spring of 1979

As the field lay within the "green belt" the challenges were considerable. Ideas were a bound, but the practicalities provided hurdles of Grand National proportions all to be overcome. Would the local planning authority allow a building on this section of green belt? How would we fund such a venture? What would be the time scale?

I believe it is called thinking outside the box? The decision was made not to priorities but to attack on all fronts, meeting any concern as it was presented.

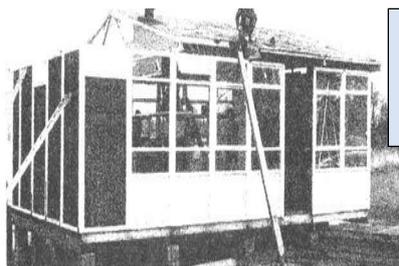
For some perverse reason this approached worked.

The Education Authority was contacted with a proposition to remove the school's obsolete portacabin classroom at no cost to the Authority and reinstate the area if they would donate the same. With the assumption that this would be successful the local planning authority was questioned upon the possibility of siting this classroom on the field. With outlined planning granted work began on the site, foundations, sewerage and water subject to funding. Funding was supported by generous local businesses providing machinery, JCB, Mixers, materials.



One frosty March morning (22/3/1980) the classroom was dismantled, each piece labelled, passed over the hedge, to a waiting flat bedded lorry surmounted by the eager workers for the bumpy ride along Wilden Lane closely followed by an impromptu police car!

By nightfall after an extremely long day the floor and sides were standing proud. The work force took their leave with the intention of completion the following morning. However, the weather intervened depositing six inches of snow camouflaging the whole site. To their credit the rebuild was completed that day. Entrance to the pavilion was by way of a flight of steps through the original doorway. An additional access was created pitchside. The toilets were positioned in the old cloakroom, small but adequate. The original changing room was literally the back off a lorry, a huge refrigerated container. The later proved to be the catalyst, the lever, which persuaded the council to allow the club to extend further into the green belt.

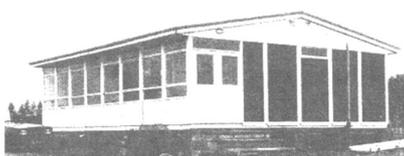


Building a pavilion by numbers
Wilden's first modern-day football team



It requires saying over and over again how supportive local businesses were in offering the goods and machinery free of charge and how accommodating the Local and County Authorities were and the more than generous community who attended the numerous fund-raising events required to meet the financial demands

Over the next two months the water mains and sewerage became



Bits were added circa 1990



operational. The pavilion was furnished with cast offs from Cradley Liberal Club and a bar created more in hope. Once again operating on multi-fronts, a liquor licence was sought whilst engaging in conversation with a number of breweries.

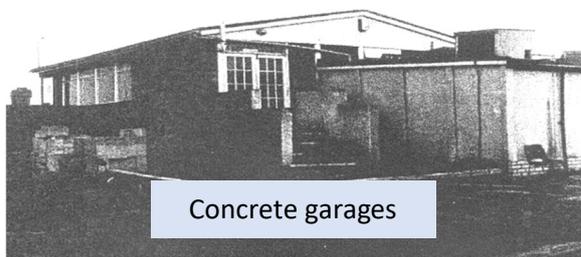
A court appearance, dressed accordingly, was successful for a probationary period of one year granted 19th May 1980. Within one week the bar was up and running. A cellar was created under the building nestling between the foundation pillars, a sarcophagus 3 feet by 10 feet and two kegs high, accessed through a three feet high door. Luxury was forced to wait for the extensive extension and the professional cellar.

Electricity was a real issue as the club was situated so far from the mains supply and little or no funds to meet the expensive trench and connection costs. It had to be a generator, borrowed from a local business. This was housed in an old shed adjacent to the entry steps... Just don't tell H & S!! Each and every opening manned by the volunteer labour force, the generator had to be primed and fired up. It was truly successful. The down side was that the lights all dimmed when the fruit machine paid out. The generator was an ever present for two years when the owners of Wilden Croft permitted a line from their residence, trenched by the club, to the club thus allowing mains electricity to flow. The generator, knowing its demise, died the very evening before the connection was completed. Even this situation was far from satisfactory and one year later was replaced by our own supply thanks to the generosity of Malcolm Lee allowing a trench to be dug across the old sports field.



We were now established but things were never static. Ambitions were immense and the club was destined to evolve. Members and contacts were the source of such initiatives.

A carpet works in Clensmore, Kidderminster with three derelict concrete garages made contact. Were they of any use? A site visit and a few chosen pressure points resulted in a heap of concrete panels. The site was quickly cleared and three garages in Kidderminster became two in Wilden. They became the perfect changing rooms.



Concrete garages

A more permanent roof was required. Timber was purchased but an error in the order by us or the supplier saw nine twelve-foot lengths instead of twelve nine foot. No problem! The over hang provided the perfect external shelter. This in turn provided the basis of a new building line.



Using this line, a new tubular framework created a veranda of sorts which quickly became boxed in.



Basil circa 1984

During the early years many discussions were held with Edith as the peppercorn rent was initially ideal in order to develop further a seven-year security of tenure was required. The land ownership passed to Edith's son and a rent of £2,000 per annum was agreed.

1984 with the help of grant aid we secured the county's first non-turf wicket at a cost of £5000. The first season saw an amazing 80 games played. Whilst the base remains as good as new the surface has been replaced on two occasions.

The results of this labour saw Wilden take the title of champions

A change of brewery saw an injection of capital allowing us to purchase the land outright for the sum of £20,000. This loan of £20k was connected to the sale of draught ales by some magical formula which reduced the loan pro rata.



Cup Winners 1984



Thank you Baggeridge



Two years further down the line Banks's Brewery, later to be known as Marston's, bought out the Bass loan for some £27,000 and a year on the club renegotiated the deal setting the sum at £50,000 to enable the club the reinvent itself with the aid of the volunteers, professionals and



Baggeridge Brick Company. The latter were generous to a fault offering some 7000 bricks free of charge. This not only allowed the covering of the original classroom but with the council's blessing (planning agreed), extend the building at each end creating something of a challenging shape as every square inch was grasped. Football and social events flourished with the club raising thousands of pounds for charities including lighting 1000 candles for Children in Need.



1000 candles, £1000 for Children in Need
Our woodland yet to be developed





A view across WVCC

The woodland was purchased for a further £5,000 followed two years later by the purchase of the strip of land shadowing the wayleave drive offering our own access should the need ever arise.

All was calm and amicable, the club peacefully existing with loans being reduced at a pleasing pace. The Millennium celebrated the future looked promising if not exciting until January 2006. A fire started in an area of the club without reason, excepting that of arson, reduced most of the club to ashes. There was a simple decision which took days of deliberation whether to fold or rebuild. Although insured for £120,000+ it was deemed to be under insured even though the insurance company had set the figures. Having become almost loan free we were forced once more to turn the brewery to fund the nine months rebuild. The loan of £65,000 was initial set against sales and a monthly repayment. At this point in time all was well within the financial compass of the club.



The great fire of Wilden 2006

The sporting activities of the club ebbed and flowed reflecting the interest of the membership at any one moment in time, which in turn was a reflection of the Country's economic strength. Cricket from its dizzy heights began to decline reflecting the national trend and at one time there was no team for a couple of years. Football ambled along until kickers emerged opening the flood gates for junior team after team. This surged created a demand from a wider field as venues were at a premium. The club was used and grateful but with financial support available the larger clubs began to cream not only players but coaches and once again our numbers declined, some would argue to a more sustainable level.

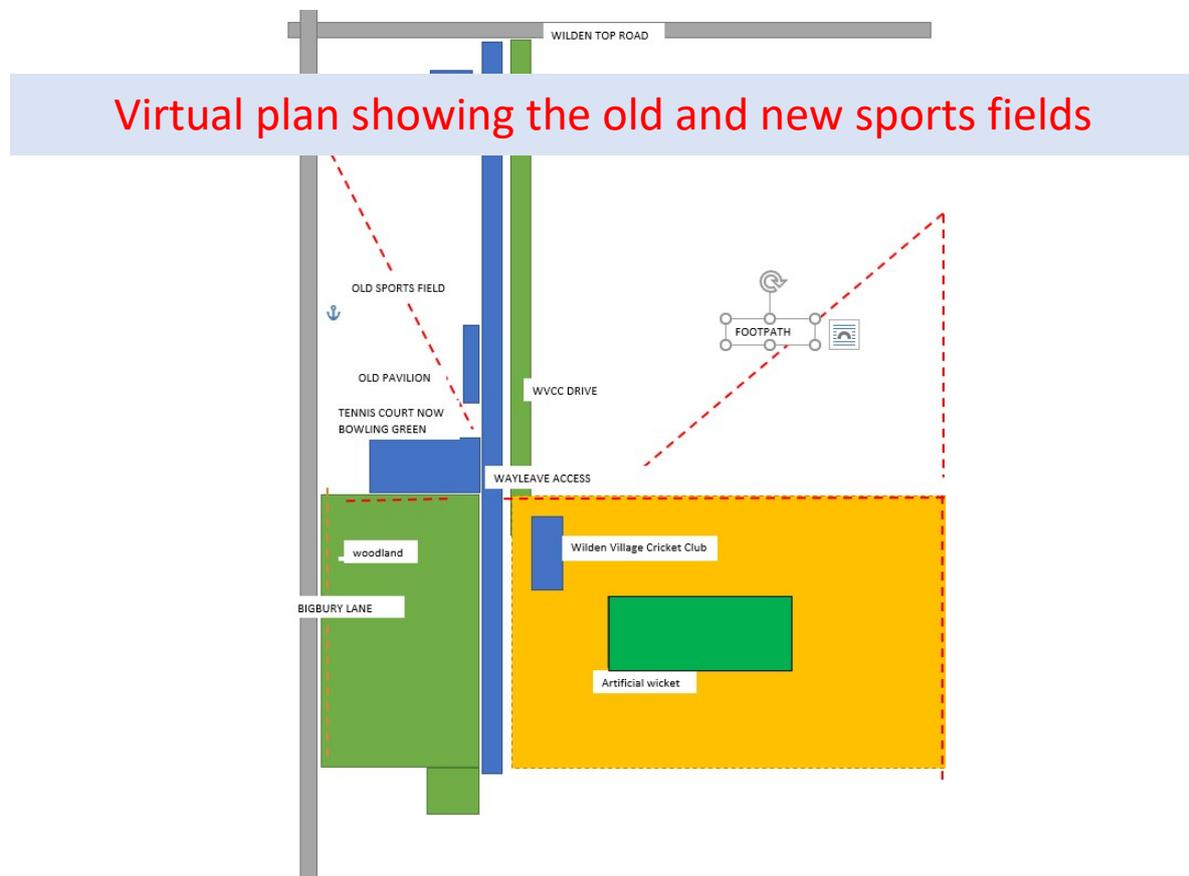
The universal slow-down in the "pub" trade resulting in the closure of thousands of public houses systematic of social drinking habits, promoted in part by the smoking ban had a profound effect on the club's finances. The whole package was rethought, adjusted and financially screwed down. We became by necessity far more professional and accountable. Even so the club refused to slumber through this negative environment finding means and ways to advance by an investing an estimated £10,000 of development namely a new kitchen, new flooring and furniture, a new heating system, a new artificial wicket and develop a bowling green.

The club during its 40 years has secured but two minor grants 30 years a part. The first to install the artificial wicket and the second to replace the heating system. Both were partial funding. Although major grants would have been welcomed with open arms, there is something hugely satisfying and triumphant in the fact that a group of volunteers have turned a field and a rotting temporary classroom into a £500,000 “business”. Well done.

The future is never a for gone conclusion. The highly successful original works recreational centre folded after 70 years. WVCC has notched up 40 years and is laying solid foundations to continue the work. Steps have been taken to dramatically reduce the loan debt becoming loan free within a decade whilst taking positive action to increase the facilities on offer to its membership. But who can predict the future?

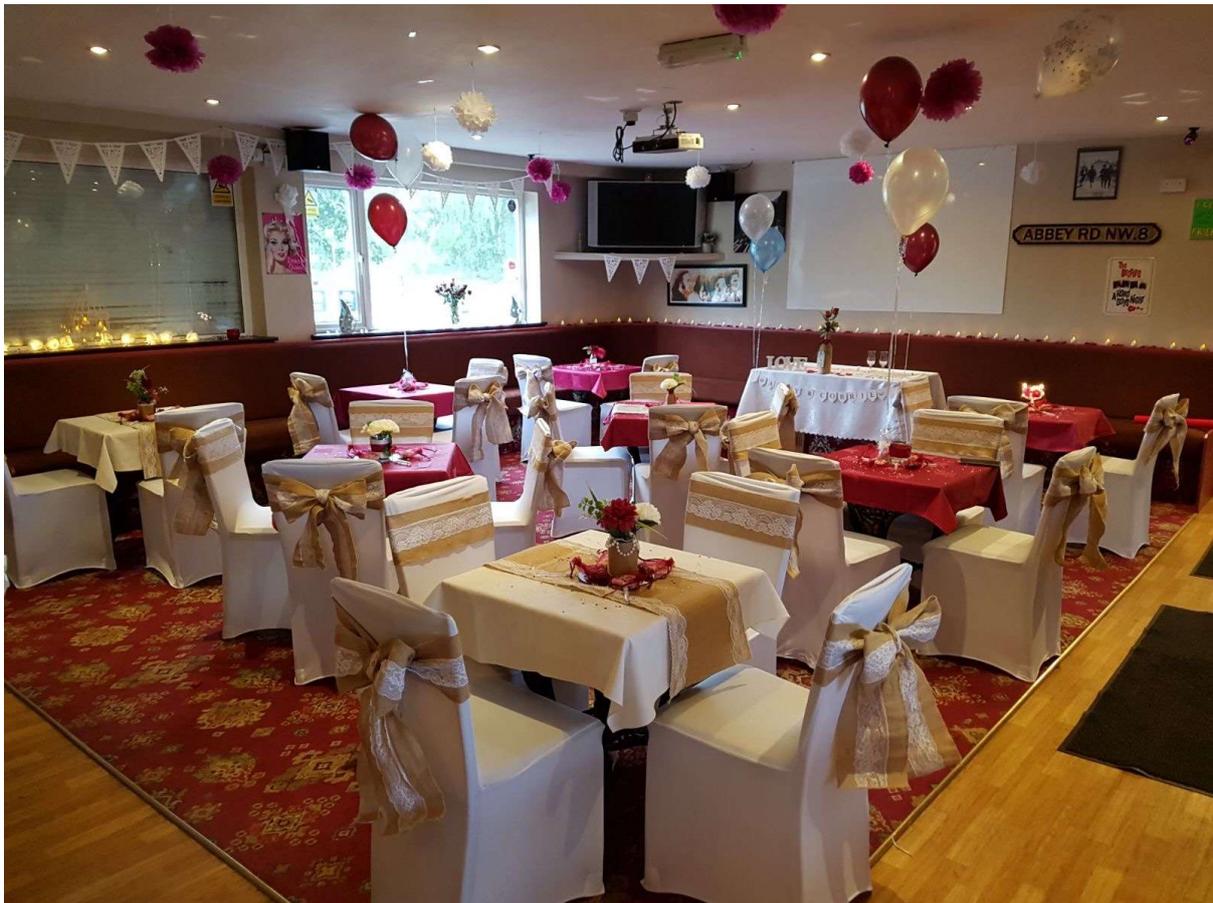
Investing in Wilden

Our thanks to all who have contributed to this amazing community project and every success to those willing volunteers who are currently running with this baton.





Catering at WVCC



Historical Wilden



Wilden Works circa 1854 drawn from a poker work image of the time. Note the redirected Stour and waterwheel.



Wilden Lane circa 1930 squeezing between the Works and Wilden House



Wilden House with the old Post Office featured to the left

BALDWIN TRAIL: WILDEN



Coronation Drapes George VI Arts & Craft Altar Drapes



William Morris Gold Altar Frontal



Lucilla's Prayer Book

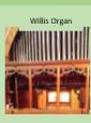


Baldwin Silver

Every window is a Burne-Jones Masterpiece



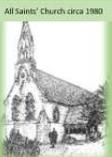

Alfred's Memorial



Willis Organ



Baldwin Graves



All Saints' Church circa 1880



All Saints' School circa 1880

Further information please refer to the church notice boards
www.wildentowitley.org.uk

Famous Names



Alfred Baldwin created his own parish and mini cathedral. A great industrialist with philanthropic ideals. 1841-1908



Louisa, Alfred's wife, one of the MacDonald sisters, an author in her own right, often seen in school reading to the girls. 1845-1925



Prime Minister 1923-1924, 1924-1929, 1935-1937, Church warden, School Manager 1867-1947



Sir Edward Burne-Jones Pre-Raphaelite artists source of the famous All Saints' Church Windows 1833-1898



Rudyard Kipling, author, nephew of Louisa visited All Saints on numerous occasions 1865-1936



William Morris, Arts & Craft Movement, designed the All Saints' Gold Altar Frontal 1865-1896

**WILDEN OWES A GREAT DEAL TO THE
BALDWINS AND THEIR FAMILY
CONNECTIONS!**

